

Skin Biopsy (Parent Information)

What is a skin biopsy?

A skin biopsy is one of the tests requested by the Metabolic Consultants to diagnose certain metabolic disorders. Some metabolic conditions can only be diagnosed by carrying out a skin biopsy. It is a quick procedure where a small piece of skin is removed and sent for testing. The biopsy will be carried out in the Outpatient's Department or as part of the tests carried out when your child is in hospital.

What happens to the skin sample?

Your child's skin sample is placed in a special tube and sent immediately to a specialist laboratory in England. The sample is tested for abnormalities in the DNA or to determine the presence or absence of specific chemical reactions.

How is a skin biopsy taken?

Before the procedure, the nurse will explain what will happen and answer any questions you may have. You will be asked to sign a consent form for the procedure. Please tell the doctor / nurse if your child has any allergies or is taking any medication.

The biopsy may leave a slight scar similar to a chicken pox mark. Because of this the biopsy will be taken from the inside of your child's thigh in young children or inside of their upper arm if they are 5 years or older. Your child will have local anaesthetic cream placed on the area for 45-90 minutes to numb it before the biopsy is taken. It is important that your child does not move when the biopsy is being taken. It may be easier if they are lying down. You can stay with your child, distracting them with a toy, reading a book or watching TV.

How long does it take?

After the cream is removed it takes 5 minutes for the whole procedure and 10 seconds of this for the skin biopsy to be taken. A dressing will be put on the area where the biopsy is taken.

Will it be sore?

The local anaesthetic cream will wear off after 4 hours. After this you can give your child paracetamol or Ibuprofen as directed by your doctor or as instructed on the label. Usually there is very little pain afterwards. Unless your child is staying in hospital for more testing they can go home when the biopsy is taken.

What care does the site of the skin biopsy need when at home?

The dressing should be left on your child's biopsy site for 3 days unless it becomes wet, dirty or soiled. If this happens, wash your hands before and after reapplying a new dressing. When washing, avoid wetting the dressing. Do not shower or bath for 3 days. After 3 days remove the dressing, wash as normal and apply a normal plaster. The skin biopsy site should have healed within 10 days.

Check the skin biopsy site for any signs of infection as listed below;

- Redness
- Swelling
- Pain / soreness not going away or getting worse
- Ooze (it is normal to see a little bit of blood coming through the dressing immediately after the skin biopsy is taken)
- Soreness
- Itching
- High temperature or generally feeling unwell. If you bring your child to your GP tell them about the skin biopsy.

If you notice any of the signs above please attend your local GP or contact one of the nurses in the metabolic unit 01 8784646/8784409 Monday - Thursday 9am - 4pm
Friday 9am -2pm.

How long will the results take?

Because of the type of tests carried out it can take more than 10 weeks for results. Sometimes a biopsy may be sent to another laboratory which will delay the over all results for a number of weeks. However, if a diagnosis is found during these stages, your child's doctor will contact you.



Author: Eilish O' Connell Version: 1
Approval Date: January 2014
Review Date: January 2016
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